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WASHINGTON'S UNOFFICIAL GAME GUIDE

>> **FREE** <<
express

A publication of *The Washington Post*

APRIL 18-24, 2005

April 18,19 | Washington Nationals vs. Florida Marlins April 20,21 | vs. Atlanta Braves

Back to His Old Self: →
Braves' Jones bounces
back after a slow 2004



Vinny Castilla
hits the Nats'
first home
run at RFK
Stadium.

Team Players

**From bullpen to bats, Nationals
find a way to keep it interesting**

PLUS: SCORECARD 18

SUSAN WALSH/AP



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(off the) Field*

* 5 Minutes with: Ryan Church

IN 2004, center fielder Ryan Church was named Expos Minor League Player of the Year after batting .343 with 17 home runs and 78 RBI in 98 games.

When did you first know you wanted to be a major league baseball player?
I was 6 years old and I just started T-ball. I was watching Will Clark back in the day when he was with the San Francisco Giants and I remember saying, "One day I'm gonna be a major league baseball player."

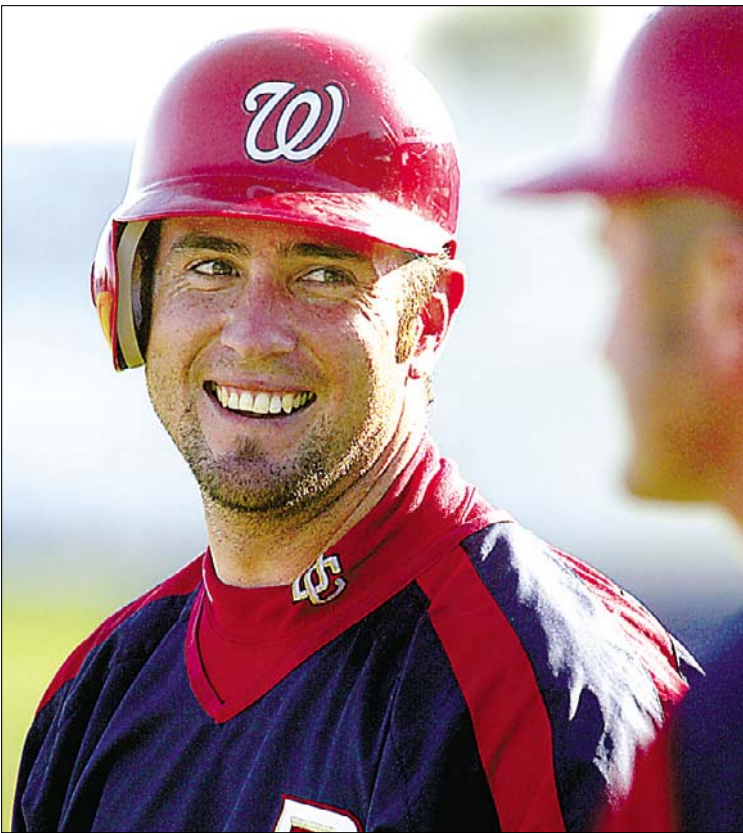
What would you want to be if you weren't a baseball player?
A federal agent. It looks cool.

What advice do you have for kids who dream of playing in the major leagues?
If you have dreams and aspirations,

anything can come true. If you stay positive about everything and set your goals high, there shouldn't be any reason why you can't achieve your dreams.

What's your favorite thing to do when you're not thinking about baseball?
Play video games. Right now I'm the best. I can't get any games. I'm challenging everyone with Tiger Woods [PGA Tour] and nobody wants to play me.

If you could be commissioner for a day, what's the first thing you'd do?
Let Pete Rose back. I'd bring him back so he can get in the Hall of Fame.



JOHN McDONNELL/TWP

What's one intricacy of the game that most fans don't notice when they come to the park?

In baseball, there's a game within the game. As a hitter, if you have guys on base, sometimes you have to give yourself up [for the good of the team].

Sometimes even if you want a home run, a fly ball can be just as good because you bring the runner home.

Do you have any superstitions?
Nothing specific.

If I get a hit in my first at bat, I'll stick with whatever I did. If I don't, I'll change it up.

What's your most satisfying moment in baseball?
Probably making this club. Knowing that I finally broke camp with the team and I've finally arrived.

When I got called that I made the team, I just sat there. I didn't know what to do. I still haven't done one of those yells. That's what I feel like I need to do. Now it's all about staying here. GARY KARTON

G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	BB	TB	SB	CS	SF	SH	HBP	SLG	AVG
36	84	10	16	1	0	2	9	9	23	0	0	0	0	0	.274	.190

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Washington Nationals | ACTIVE ROSTER



7 Brad Wilkerson

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.333	1	4	.378



19 Ryan Church

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.238	1	3	.304



6 Jose Guillen

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.333	5	8	.341



15 Cristian Guzman

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.128	0	1	.167



3 Jose Vidro

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.297	2	5	.372



9 Vinny Castilla

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.393	2	7	.452



24 Nick Johnson

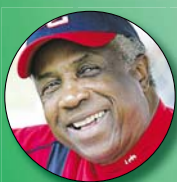
BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.281	0	2	.439

BENCH	BA	HR	RBI	OBP
77 Carlos Baerga	.000	0	0	.000
29 Gary Bennett	.000	0	0	.000
28 Tony Blanco	.200	0	0	.200
2 Jamey Carroll	.364	0	0	.364
26 J.J. Davis	.250	0	1	.250
18 Termel Sledge	.273	1	6	.385



23 Brian Schneider

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.258	0	3	.314



← **Manager** Frank Robinson
1B Coach Don Buford
Hitting Coach Tom McCraw

Bench Coach Eddie Rodriguez
Pitching Coach Randy St. Claire
3B Coach Dave Huppert

OUTSIDE THE LINES

The Nationals continue to tweak their lineup as the season progresses:

- Look for **Zach Day** to move to the bullpen once **Tony Armas Jr.**, out with a groin injury, returns to the starting rotation later this month.
- Outfielder **Ryan Church** is back in center field after starting in left field while recovering from an injury.
- Catcher **Brian Schneider** has been a work horse at a tough position, starting nine of the first 10 games.

Starting Pitchers

Livan Hernandez | **61**

W-L	ERA	K	WHIP
1-1	4.50	13	1.25



Esteban Loaiza | **21**

W-L	ERA	K	WHIP
0-0	4.61	7	1.10

Zach Day | **54**

W-L	ERA	K	WHIP
0-1	9.00	3	1.60

Tomo Ohka | **34**

W-L	ERA	K	WHIP
1-1	4.50	4	1.33

22 John Patterson

W-L	ERA	K	WHIP
0-1	2.57	6	1.00

The Bullpen

Chad Cordero | **32**

W-L	ERA	K	WHIP
2-0	1.23	6	1.09



Joey Eischen | **58**

W-L	ERA	K	WHIP
1-0	5.40	1	1.50

Luis Ayala | **56**

W-L	ERA	K	WHIP
1-0	1.35	3	0.75

59 Joe Horgan

W-L	ERA	K	WHIP
0-0	15.43	2	3.86

Antonio Osuna | **13**

W-L	ERA	K	WHIP
0-0	42.43	0	6.86

52 T.J. Tucker

W-L	ERA	K	WHIP
0-0	0.00	1	1.50



Brothers in Arms

Camaraderie has helped the Nationals bullpen build a solid early-season record

THEY'RE ALWAYS TALKING BASEBALL. Giving each other little tips. Pitch this guy inside. Start that guy with a breaking ball. Don't get down on yourself.

For the players who make up the Nationals bullpen, the camaraderie is the key to success.

"We're a band of brothers that hang out in a little hut for three hours a night and watch

HANGING CHAD: Cordero is off to a strong start.

baseball," said left-hander Joey Eischen. "We sit down there and we share everything. We're like a little family."

Through the first 10 games of the season, the "Band of Brothers" had an ERA of 1.19 and they led the majors with four wins. Eischen earned the first win in Nationals history by pitching a scoreless seventh inning in Washington's second game in Philadelphia. It the next game, closer Chad Cordero preserved a one-run lead in the 10th by retir-

ing the heart of the Phillies lineup — Bobby Abreu, Jim Thome and Pat Burrell. "Those are three great hitters who could tie the game with one swing of the bat," Cordero said.

The final victory was earned by Luis Ayala, who has shown why GM Jim Bowden refused the Angels' request to include Ayala in the trade that brought Jose Guillen to the Nationals. In 6 2/3 innings this year, Ayala has given up just one run while striking out three and walking none.

But while the bullpen has shown signs of dominance, they've also faltered at times. In Washington's four losses, their ERA is 15.30.

"They are all going to have struggles sometime during the year," said Pitching Coach Randy St. Claire. "But these guys are giving me the best they've got every time and they're a great group of guys." GARY KARTON

'He Can Do It All'

In need of a versatile player with a big bat, the Nationals knew who to call: Jose Guillen

THE OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT was still a day away, but Jim Bowden couldn't wait. Three hours after learning he would be the first general manager in Washington Nationals history, Bowden was busy addressing the team's biggest need.

"A big bat in the lineup," said Bowden. "That's what [Manager] Frank Robinson wanted."

And Bowden knew just where to get that. ... and more. He picked up the phone, called California Angels General Manager Bill Stoneman and made the deal to acquire outfielder Jose Guillen.

"It was the first call I made after getting

"When he steps on the field, he's all business."

the job," said Bowden. "He was affordable, he was available. I know him well. He can hit, he can field, he plays hard, he plays hurt and he's a great guy in the clubhouse. He can do it all."

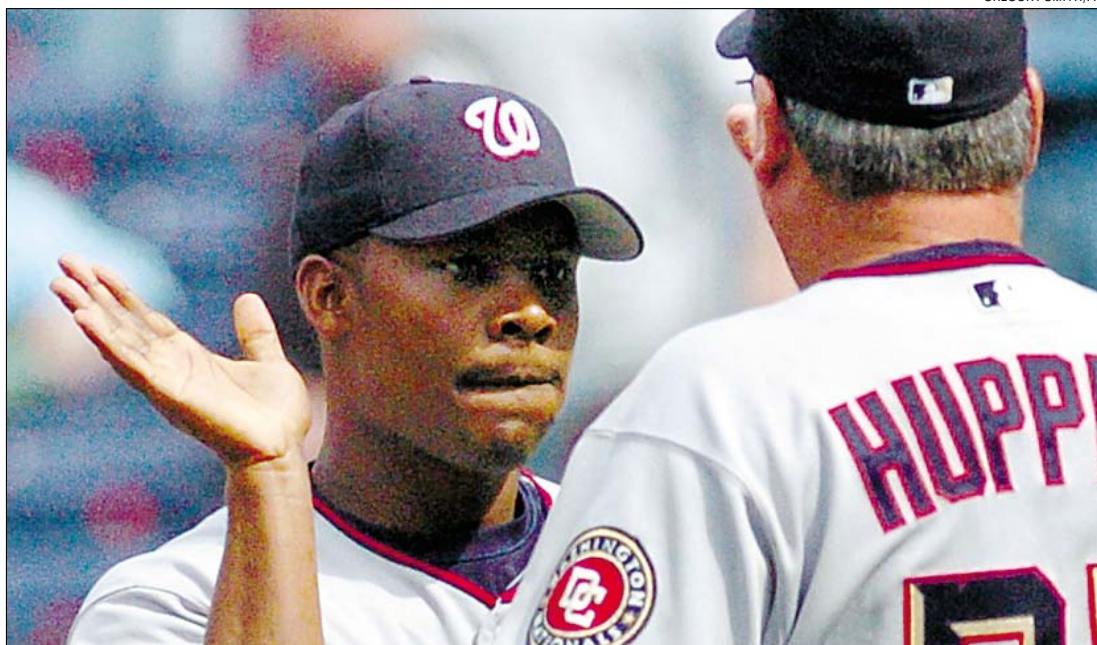
Guillen exhibited his all-around ability in just one inning during a game last week in Florida. With the score tied at 2 in the top

of the 10th, Guillen drilled a two-out home run to straight away center field to put the Nationals ahead. Then, with one out in the bottom half of the same inning, Florida's Juan Pierre smacked a line drive down the right field line. Sprinting toward the wall with the game on the line, Guillen slid, fielded the ball on a short hop and in one motion, popped up and threw to second to stop the speedy Pierre from advancing to third.

"That was one of the most important plays of the game, next to his home run," said closer Chad Cordero, who earned the win. "Anytime you get a guy on third with less than two outs, a little ground ball can get him in. So for Jose to hold him to a double was awesome."

Guillen, who hitting coach Tom McCraw called "pound for pound the strongest hitter in the game," has delivered in other key situations as well.

Batting .359 with five home runs to open the season, Guillen has three game-winning RBI. He hit two home runs and drove in the winning run with a sacrifice fly in the final game against Atlanta to give the Nationals a



HEAVEN CAN WAIT: After a blowup with Anaheim manager Mike Scioscia, the Angels traded Jose Guillen to the Nationals.

winning record entering their home opener against Arizona.

"He's just been sensational in every respect," said Robinson. "He cheers for his teammates. He's excited when they come up with a big hit. And he plays hard. When he steps on the field, he's all business."

It's what happened when Guillen was pulled from the field that caused problems last year with the Angels. In a game late in the season against Oakland, Guillen tossed his helmet toward Manager Mike Scioscia and slammed his glove into the dugout wall after being pulled for a pinch runner in the eighth inning of a

3-3 contest. Guillen, who set career highs in home runs (27) and RBI (104) last year, was later suspended for the final eight games of the season and the playoffs.

Still, Bowden, who signed Guillen when he was GM of the Reds, had no reservations trading for a guy he says he "would trust my kids with."

"He cares about people," said Bowden. "He cares about the game and he wants to win. ... We knew we were getting a proven player who can produce at the most difficult of situations. And that's what he's done for us so far." GARY KARTON

(Nats Notes)

Before Mark Grace won a world championship with the Arizona Diamondbacks, he played 13 seasons for the Chicago Cubs. And although the Cubs team missed the playoffs in 11 of those years ... >>

Fan Support Is a Team's Saving Grace

... he still remembers the consistent and unconditional support of the fans.

"It's really the only place that I know of where win or lose, you're playing in front of a sell-out," said Grace. "And I played on some bad teams. But they loved you, they respected you, and all they wanted was an honest effort. If you gave them an honest effort and busted your butt, they loved you, win or lose. And it's not that way everywhere."

Grace, who retired from the Diamondbacks after the 1993 season and now works as a broadcaster, believes the Nationals could have that same relationship with their fans.

"This was a great baseball town," said Grace. "If they could get something like we had here, it'd be great for the team." Grace was quick to add that he doesn't think this team will struggle the

way many of his Cubs teams did. "I think they're going to be pretty good."

While the Nationals are appreciative of the fans' support, they understand that the Cubs have a unique situation.

"East Coast baseball is a little different," said outfielder **Brad Wilkerson**.

Manager **Frank Robinson** agreed.

"I hope that the fans will continue to come out," he said. "And I know it has a lot to do with the way we perform on the field. And we're going

"If you gave them an honest effort ... they loved you, win or lose."

to try to perform to where they will continue to have something to come out for."

ROAD WARRIORS

The Nationals were the last team in the majors to have their home opener. But unlike last year when the then-Montreal Expos finished 18 games under .500 on the road, this year's team is off to a much improved start following its three-city, nine-game road trip to begin the season.

"As a team we performed very well on the road," Robinson said. "It's one of the things we haven't done in the last three years."

The Nationals' three opponents on their road trip — Philadelphia, Florida and Atlanta — were a combined 133-109 at home last season.

GARY KARTON

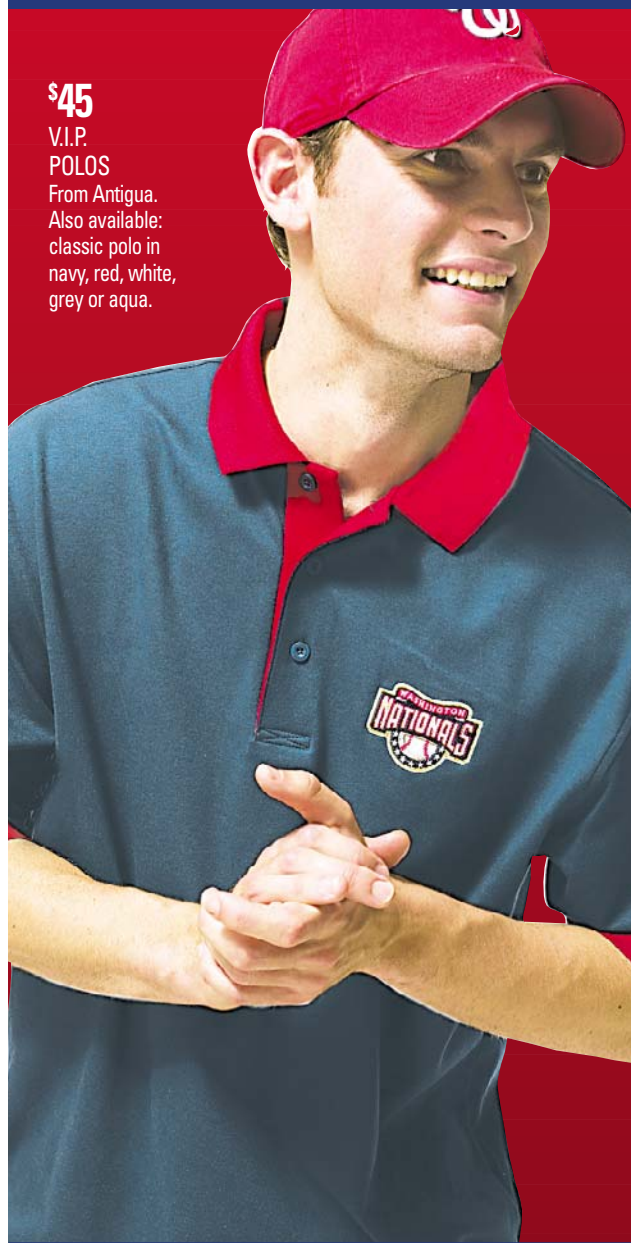
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Florida Marlins | ACTIVE ROSTER



11 Alex Gonzalez

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.321	1	3	.345



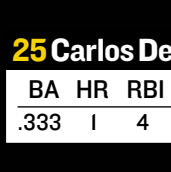
1 Luis Castillo

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.172	0	0	.294



19 Mike Lowell

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.200	2	6	.263



25 Carlos Delgado

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.333	1	4	.450



16 Paul Lo Duca

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.387	1	4	.406

BENCH

	BA	HR	RBI	OBP
3 Chris Aguila	.000	0	0	.000
18 Jeff Conine	.222	0	0	.333
2 Damion Easley	.308	0	0	.400
10 Lenny Harris	.000	0	0	.000
6 Matt Treanor	.400	0	0	.500

OUTFIELD



9 Juan Pierre

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.324	0	3	.381



24 Miguel Cabrera

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.286	3	9	.325

43 Juan Encarnacion

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.276	2	8	.400



Starting Pitchers

	W-L	ERA	K	WHIP
21 Josh Beckett	2-0	0.00	17	.73
22 Al Leiter	0-1	3.38	7	1.41
34 A.J. Burnett	1-1	2.40	9	1.13
35 Dontrelle Willis	2-0	0.00	10	.56
36 Brian Moehler	0-0	2.70	4	1.05

The Bullpen

	W-L	ERA	K	WHIP
40 Nate Bump	0-1	1.93	0	.86
50 Todd Jones	0-0	0.00	0	1.50
45 Jim Mecir	0-0	0.00	4	0.00
59 G. Mota	0-0	0.00	2	1.80
46 Matt Perisho	0-0	5.40	0	1.00

OUTSIDE THE LINES

There's no secret what the Marlins chief strength is — their starting pitchers:

→ Josh Beckett and Dontrelle Willis did not allow a run in their first two starts.

→ The Marlins outscored their opponents 38-2 in their first five victories.

→ Florida was outscored 6-13 in their first four losses.

→ Through nine games, the Marlins led the NL with a team ERA of 1.36.

Atlanta Braves | ACTIVE ROSTER



1 Rafael Furcal

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.171	1	4	.190



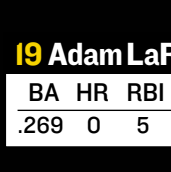
22 Marcus Giles

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.333	0	0	.500



10 Chipper Jones

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.382	3	7	.475



19 Adam LaRoche

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.269	0	5	.345



23 Johnny Estrada

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.286	0	4	.318

BENCH

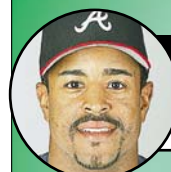
	BA	HR	RBI	OBP
24 Wilson Betemit	.000	0	0	.000
14 Julio Franco	.385	0	0	.500
18 R. Langerhans	.222	0	0	.333
4 Pete Orr	.281	0	0	.400
12 Eddie Perez	.188	0	0	.250

OUTFIELD



25 Andruw Jones

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.323	1	4	.410



33 Brian Jordan

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.167	1	4	.242

43 Raul Mondesi

BA	HR	RBI	OBP
.133	0	2	.161



Starting Pitchers

	W-L	ERA	K	WHIP
15 Tim Hudson	1-0	1.38	8	1.23
29 John Smoltz	0-2	8.00	16	1.78
32 Mike Hampton	1-0	1.29	4	1.21
52 John Thomson	1-1	3.46	9	1.46
30 H. Ramirez	0-0	3.86	4	1.71

The Bullpen

	W-L	ERA	K	WHIP
50 Adam Bernero	2-0	3.86	4	1.00
40 Roman Colon	0-0	6.75	5	1.50
49 Kevin Gryboski	0-0	2.45	2	1.64
51 Dan Kolb	0-1	9.00	2	1.50
37 Chris Reitsma	0-0	2.25	2	0.75

OUTSIDE THE LINES

The Braves have not won 13 straight division titles by staying the same every year:

→ John Smoltz, the 1996 Cy Young award winner, is back in the starting rotation after three years as the team's closer.

→ Dan Kolb has taken Smoltz's spot as the closer, and has blown just one game — which came against the Nationals on April 12.

→ Brian Jordan, a key player on the 1999 Braves, is back with the team as the starting left fielder.

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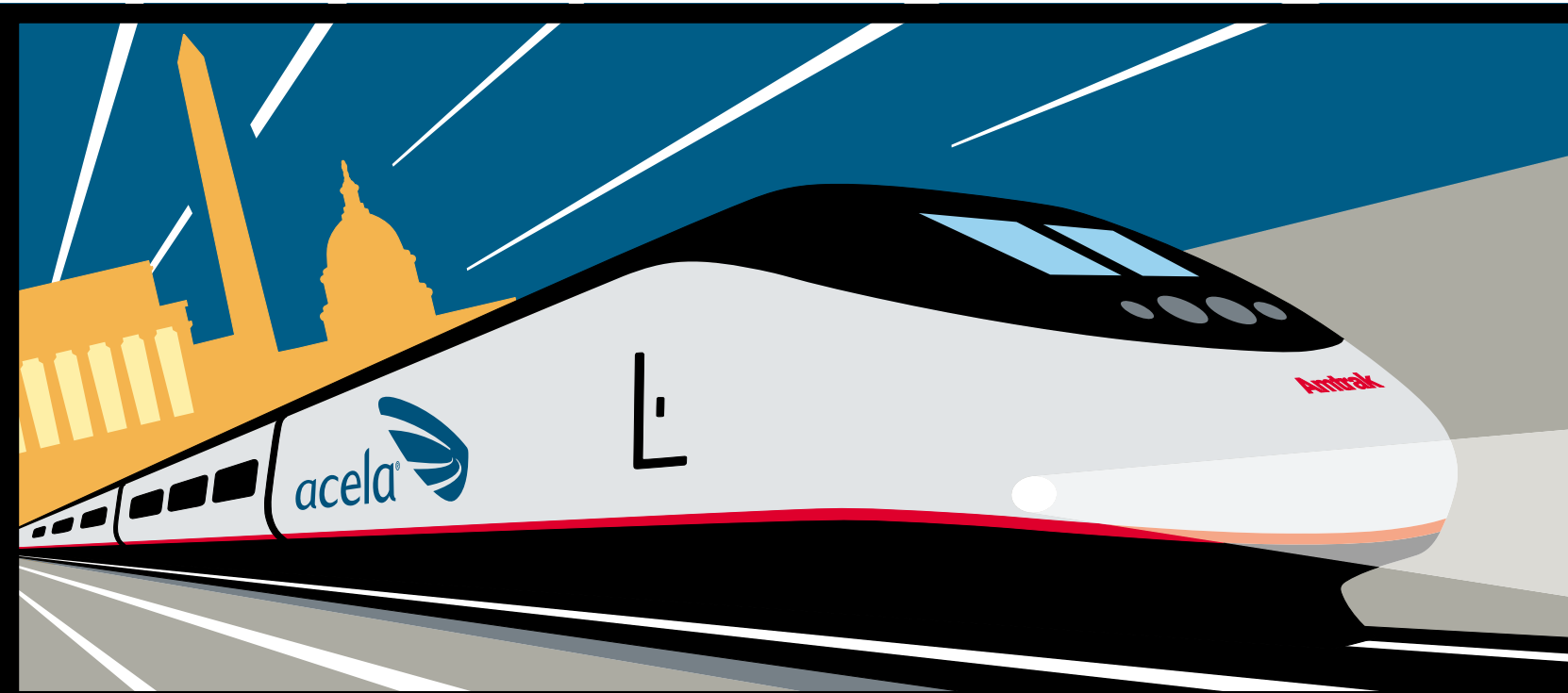
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[illegible]

		Team: <i>Washington Nationals</i> vs																			
		Date:					Start Time:					End Time:					Time of Game:				
		Scorer:																			
#	Player	Pos	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	AB	R	H	RBI	E				
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S	Runs												T O T A L S								
U	Hits												AB:		RBI:						
M	Errors												R:		E:						
S	Left on Base												H:		LOB:						
Pitcher		W-L	IP	H	P	ER	BB	SO	HB	BK	WP	TBF	Catcher				PB				

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Braves' Magic Formula

No talk of 'dynasty,' just research and good old-fashioned instinct

THERE ARE NO SHORTCUTS or tricks of the trade when trying to build a baseball dynasty.

In fact, according to Atlanta Braves General Manager John Schuerholz, who is responsible for building one of the most successful franchises in any professional sport, he never thinks long term.

"It's a foolish concept to think that someone can build a dynasty," said Schuerholz. "It doesn't happen that way. You're always focused on the team that you have to construct each year ... and then you trust the system."

Schuerholz avoids impetuous judgments and ego.

The combination of a single focus and belief in the system has led to long-term success for Schuerholz and the Braves. In the last 14 years with Schuerholz as GM, the Braves have the best record in baseball



POINT MAN: GM John Schuerholz, left, has built champions in the American and National leagues.

and hold the professional sports record with 13 consecutive winning seasons. By finishing 40 games over .500 last year when they were picked by baseball experts to finish in

the middle of their division, the Braves won more than 100 games for the fifth time in seven seasons.

"I've said many times that the Executive of

the Year Award should be renamed the John Schuerholz Award," said Nationals GM Jim Bowden. "He's the best GM of our time."

According to Schuerholz, the approach begins at the end of each season with an honest and in-depth assessment of the talent on the Braves' major league team and in their minor league system. After the team determines the needs for the upcoming season and which holes can be filled within the system, Schuerholz and his staff create a list of players to target. Then the phone calls begin.

"It's a comfortable system," said Schuerholz. "Everyone knows their role. Everyone knows that I rely on them as an important part of what we do."

But there is that one last step before any deals become final. It's the one part of the plan that's impossible for others to duplicate.

"It's my gut feeling," said Schuerholz. "The instinctive, intuitive, gut belief that I end up having after filtering all the information."

The feeling is based on 39 years of experience in baseball and 23 years as a general manager. Through the years, Schuerholz has learned to rely heavily on those he trusts most — from administrative staff, to minor league coaches to the assistant GM to the scouts to Manager Bobby Cox, who Schuerholz says is his most important relationship in the organization.

Schuerholz avoids impetuous judgments and ego. Instead, he falls back on the system that has worked for so long. He analyzes the circumstances, pinpoints the needs and listens to the recommendations from the people whose judgment he respects.

"I serve as the final filter," he said. "That's my job. And so far, we've been right a lot of times." **GARY KARTON**

The Northern Express

Florida hopes to ride its acquisition from Toronto into the postseason

AFTER WINNING the 2003 World Series, Florida Marlins owner Jeffrey Loria — a former owner of the Montreal Expos — rewarded his players with a prize made in Canada: the largest championship rings in history.

Each quarter-pound hunk of jewelry was adorned with 228 white diamonds, 13 rubies and a single teal diamond for the eye of the marlin.

The Marlins followed up their '03 campaign with an 83-79 record, 13 games out of first. Despite missing the playoffs, they were again rewarded with a huge present from Canada. This time no carats were involved;

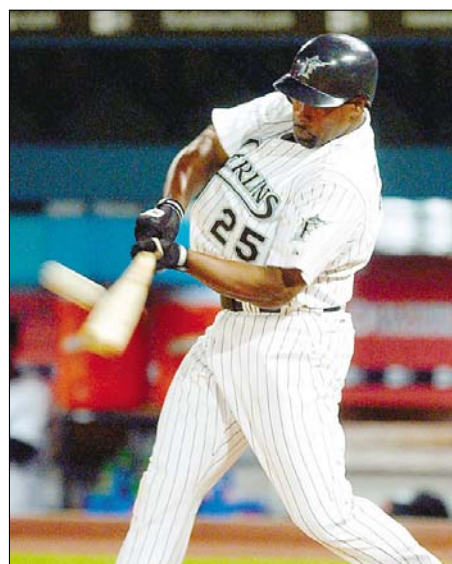
just a slugger named Carlos Delgado.

Nine years in Toronto without reaching the postseason was enough for Delgado. When he became an unrestricted free agent this past offseason, he decided it was time to move south. He just wasn't sure how far.

The Yankees courted the slugger, as did the Mets and Orioles, but he ultimately decided South Florida was the place to go.

The Marlins were in desperate need of a power-hitting, left-handed bat and Delgado

SUNNY DELIGHT: Carlos Delgado, a left-handed power slugger, is just what Florida needed most.



was available, with quite the resume to boot. He left the Blue Jays as their all-time leader in slugging percentage, runs, total bases, doubles, walks and RBI.

But most important, he brings with him another Blue Jay record: 336 home runs.

A Jan. 27 press conference introduced Delgado to the Sunshine State. The Marlins brass in attendance couldn't stop smiling.

"I guess now you know you've got your left-handed bat that you want," Loria said to manager Jack McKeon.

"It's about time," he shot back, eliciting a few laughs.

But it's likely neither side was joking. Aside from center fielder Juan Pierre, no Marlins starter batted left-handed last year.

The signing of Delgado gave the Marlins some much needed depth right in the heart of its line-up.

"I think in this ballclub we have a very good chance to win," Delgado said in January. "And that's why I [made] this decision."

BEN SHLESINGER

Feeling Chipper

After an injury-plagued '04, Braves' Jones is back in form

BEFORE HE'D EVEN SET FOOT into the old Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium, Braves third baseman Chipper Jones already had to deal with the lofty expectations of his new team — and its fans.

Being chosen No. 1 overall in the 1990 amateur draft meant Jones would be looked upon to produce some big offensive numbers. Since graduating to the big league squad in 1995 he's done just that.

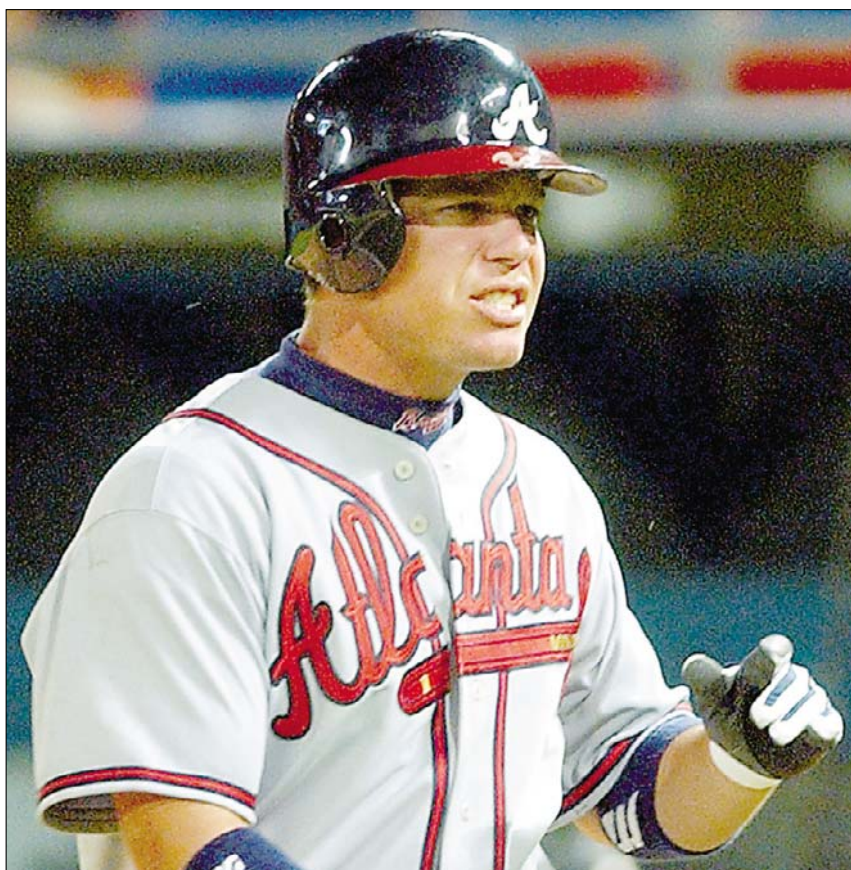
Coincidentally — or maybe not — that's the year the Braves won their first and only World Series. They made it back but lost in 1996 and 1999. Jones was a central part of all those teams, even winning the 1999 National League Most Valuable Player Award.

Now Jones is one of the few constants on the ever-evolving Braves roster that has seen former aces Greg Maddux and Tom Glavine depart for greener pastures.

The only remaining teammate who can share in all those World Series memories with Jones is right-hander John Smoltz, whose is making a return to the starting rotation this season after three dominant years as the team's closer.

In an effort to win a 14th straight division title, Manager Bobby Cox and General Manager John Schuerholz have remade the squad by adding former 20-game winner Tim Hudson, closer Danny Kolb and outfielders Brian Jordan and Raul Mondesi.

The changes have even affected Jones. Jordan's return to Atlanta — he played on



the 1999 World Series runner-up — allows Jones to go back to his natural position of third base after two years in left field that seemed to wear down his body. He missed 25 games due to injury last season.

"I just couldn't shake that injury bug," Jones told fans on his Web site. "It was just so dang frustrating to pull it here, tweak it there and down-right tear it the next day. I really felt hampered much of the year."

Jones was down in nearly every offensive category last season because of his hamstring injury, but so far this year he appears to be back to his old form. Through April 13, including a three-game series against the Nationals, Jones was batting .382 with three

home runs, seven RBI, eight runs and one stolen base.

It's unlikely he can sustain that pace all season, but if anybody can lead the Braves into the postseason again it's Jones, who, remarkably, has never been on a team that didn't win its division. **BEN SHLESINGER**

If anyone can lead the Braves to the playoffs it's Jones.

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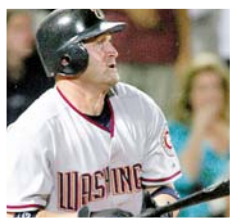
Washington Nationals | HITTING

PLAYER	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	TB	BB	SB	CS	HBP	SLG	AVG
Tomo Ohka	2	5	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	.600	.600
Vinny Castilla	9	28	5	11	3	1	2	7	22	2	0	0	1	.786	.393
Jamey Carroll	4	11	2	4	0	1	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	.545	.364
Zach Day	2	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	.333	.333
Jose Guillen	10	42	10	14	1	1	5	8	32	0	0	0	1	.762	.333
Brad Wilkerson	10	42	2	14	2	2	1	4	23	3	0	1	0	.548	.333
Jose Vidro	10	37	9	11	4	1	2	5	23	5	0	0	0	.622	.297
Nick Johnson	10	32	3	9	3	0	0	2	12	9	0	0	0	.375	.281
Terrmel Sledge	7	11	3	3	0	1	1	6	8	2	1	0	0	.727	.273
Brian Schneider	9	31	2	8	5	0	0	3	13	3	0	0	0	.419	.258

ProFile Brian Schneider

AGE:28 BAT:L THROW:R HT:6-1 WT:196 YRS:5

YR	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	SB	K	AVG	SLG
'03	108	335	34	77	9	46	0	75	.230	.394
'04	135	436	40	112	12	49	0	63	.257	.399
'05	9	31	2	8	0	3	0	5	.258	.419



J.J. Davis	5	12	0	3	0	0	0	1	3	0	1	0	0	.250	.250
Ryan Church	6	21	4	5	0	0	1	3	8	2	0	0	0	.381	.238
Tony Blanco	4	5	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	.200	.200
Esteban Loaiza	2	5	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	.200	.200
Livan Hernandez	3	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	.167	.167
Cristian Guzman	10	39	0	5	1	0	0	1	6	2	0	1	0	.154	.128
Luis Ayala	6	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	.000
Carlos Baerga	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	.000
Gary Bennett	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	.000
Will Cordero	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	.000	.000

ProFile

Vinny Castilla

AGE:37 BAT:R THROW:R HT:6-1 WT:205 YRS:14

YR	G	AB	R	H	HR	RBI	SB	K	AVG	SLG
'03	147	542	65	150	22	76	1	86	.277	.461
'04	148	583	93	158	35	131	0	113	.271	.535
'05	9	28	5	11	2	7	0	2	.393	.786

- Hit the first Nationals home run at RFK Stadium in the April 14 home opener.
- Led the National League with 131 RBI on the Colorado Rockies in 2004.
- Set a NL record with a .987 fielding percentage at third base.
- Is the first Mexican with 300 career home runs.
- Hit .304 with 40 homers and 113 RBI in both 1996 and 1997.



TONI L. SANDYS/TWP

National League | HITTING

PLAYER	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	TB	BB	SB	CS	HBP	SLG	AVG
Edgardo Alfonzo	8	31	8	16	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Joe Randa	8	29	8	13	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Jeff Kent	8	31	12	13	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Xavier Nady	9	34	6	14	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Jose Valentin	8	22	4	9	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Craig Biggio	8	32	5	13	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Pat Burrell	9	37	6	15	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Damian Miller	6	25	4	10	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Vinny Castilla	9	28	5	11	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Cesar Izturis	8	36	7	14	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Paul Lo Duca	8	31	4	12	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Chipper Jones	9	34	8	13	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Aaron Miles	8	29	5	11	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Todd Helton	8	27	4	10	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Willy Taveras	8	27	4	10	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Derrek Lee	9	33	6	12	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Chad Tracy	9	31	4	11	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Luis Gonzalez	10	34	9	12	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Brady Clark	8	33	10	11	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Carlos Delgado	9	33	5	11	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
David Eckstein	7	24	2	8	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Pedro Feliz	8	33	9	11	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Jose Guillen	10	42	10	14	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Jason LaRue	7	21	2	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Mark Loretta	9	36	7	12	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Jose Reyes	9	42	8	14	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		

ProFile

Joe Randa

AGE:35 BAT:R THROW:R HT:5-11 WT:190 YRS:10

YR	G	AB	R	H	HR
'03	131	502	80	146	16
'04	128	485	65	139	8
'05	8	29	8	13	3

YR	RBI	SB	K	AVG	SLG
'03	72	1	61	.291	.452
'04	56	0	77	.287	.408
'05	10	0	6	.448	.862



HR	RBI	TB	SB	CS	SF	HBP	SLG	AVG
2	7	24	0	0	1	1	.774	.516
3	10	25	0	0	0	1	.862	.448
2	11	23	1	0	0	1	.742	.419
3	11	28	0	0	0	0	.824	.412
2	8	18	1	0	1	0	.818	.409
1	4	21	2	0	0	1	.656	.406
4	17	30	0	0	2	0	.811	.405
1	3	14	0	1	0	1	.560	.400
2	7	22	0	0	0	1	.786	.393
1	5	20	0	0	0	1	.556	.389
1	4	16	0	0	0	0	.516	.387
3	7	24	1	0	0	0	.706	.382
0	4	14	1	0	0	0	.483	.379
0	4	13	1	0	0	1	.481	.370
0	2	11	3	1	1	1	.407	.370
2	11	21	1	0	1	0	.636	.364
2	7	19	0	0	1	0	.613	.355
2	7	21	1	0	1	0	.618	.353
1	3	15	2	2	0	3	.455	.333
1	4	18	0	0	0	3	.545	.333
0	1	10	1	0	0	2	.417	.333
1	8	16	0	0	0	0	.485	.333
5	8	32	0	0	1	1	.762	.333
0	2	8	0	0	0	3	.381	.333
0	2	14	3	1	0	2	.389	.333
1	4	20	3	1	0	0	.476	.333

American League | HITTING

PLAYER	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	TB	BB	SB	CS	SF	HBP	SLG	AVG
Ichiro Suzuki	9	36	8	15	2	0	0	3	17	4	1	0	0	0	.472	.417
Jacque Jones	8	27	4	11	2	1	2	9	21	0	1	1	2	0	.778	.407
Brian Roberts	9	37	11	15	1	2	4	10	32	4	0	0	0	0	.865	.405
Dmitri Young	9	36	9	14	1	2	3	10	28	0	0	0	1	0	.778	.389
Mark Kotsay	9	37	5	14	1	0	1	2	18	0	0	0	0	0	.486	.378
Jason Varitek	7	27	4	10	1	1	3	6	22	0	0	0	0	0	.815	.370
Carl Everett	9	30	4	11	3	0	1	9	17	0	1	3	0	0	.567	.367
Hideki Matsui	9	36	6	13	3	0	3	11	25	0	0	1	0	0	.694	.361
Mike Sweeney	9	39	1	14	4	0	0	8	18	1	0	0	0	0	.462	.359
Carlos Guillen	8	28	9	10	1	0	0	2	11	1	0	0	1	0	.393	.357
Eric Hinske	10	34	9	12	1	0	3	13	22	0	0	0	1	0	.647	.353
Josh Phelps	8	32	3	11	4	0	1	9	18	0	0	0	0	0	.563	.344
Ivan Rodriguez	8	35	5	12	2	0	0	1	14	0	0	0	0	0	.400	.343
Shea Hillenbrand	10	38	10	13	3	0	1	4	19	0	0	0	2	0	.500	.342
Rod Barajas	9	33	4	11	3	0	1	3	17	0	0	0	0	0	.515	.333
Brandon Inge	9	33	7	11	1	1	2	5	20	0	0	0	0	0	.606	.333
Derek Jeter	9	36	9	12	2	0	1	3	17	2	1	0	2	0	.472	.333
Luis Matos	9	24	6	8	1	1	1	5	14	2	0	1	2	0	.583	.333
Joe Mauer	7	27	3	9	3	0	0	3	12	1	0	0	0	0	.444	.333
Miguel Tejada	9	36	7	12	2	0	1	10	17	0	0	1	1	0	.472	.333
Rondell White	8	30	6	10	1	0	2	6	17	0	0	2	0	0	.567	.333
Garret Anderson	9	40	4	13	4	0	0	8	17	0	0	0	0	0	.425	.325
Jorge Cantu	9	37	5	12	1	0	3	8	22	0	0	1	0	0	.595	.324
Aubrey Huff	9	34	7	11	3	1	1	6	19	1	0	0	1	0	.559	.324
Scott Hatteberg	9	32	3	10	1	0	1	2	14	0	0	0	1	0	.438	.313
David Ortiz	9	32	6	10	4	0	2	7	20	0	0	1	0	0	.625	.313
Alex Rios	9	32	7	10	2	1	0	7	14	1	2	1	0	0	.438	.313

ProFile

Ichiro Suzuki

AGE:31 BAT:L THROW:R HT:5-11 WT:172 YRS:4

YR	G	AB	R	H	HR
'03	159	679	111	212	13
'04	161	704	101	262	8
'05	9	36	8	15	0

Washington Nationals | PITCHING

ProFile Tomo Ohka

AGE: 29 BAT: R THROW: R HT: 6-1 WT: 200 YRS: 6

YR	W	L	ERA	G	GS	IP	H	R	ER	SO
'03	10	12	4.16	34	34	199	233	106	92	118
'04	3	7	3.40	15	15	84.2	98	40	32	38
'05	1	1	4.50	2	2	12	9	6	6	4



PLAYER	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SHO	SV	IP	H	R	ER	HBP	BB	SO
T.J. Tucker	0	0	0.00	3	0	0	0	0	3.1	4	0	0	0	1	1
Chad Cordero	2	0	1.23	6	0	0	0	2	7.1	8	1	1	0	0	6
Luis Ayala	1	0	1.35	6	0	0	0	0	6.2	5	1	1	0	2	3
John Patterson	0	1	2.57	1	1	0	0	0	7.0	6	2	2	0	1	6
Livan Hernandez	1	1	4.50	3	3	0	0	0	20	16	11	10	0	9	13
Tomo Ohka	1	1	4.50	2	2	0	0	0	12.0	9	6	6	0	7	4
Esteban Loaiza	0	0	4.61	2	2	0	0	0	13.2	12	7	7	1	3	7
Joey Eischen	1	0	5.40	6	0	0	0	0	3.1	4	2	2	1	1	1
Zach Day	0	1	9.00	2	2	0	0	0	10	14	10	10	0	2	3
Joe Horgan	0	0	15.43	3	0	0	0	0	2.1	6	4	4	1	3	2
Antonio Osuna	0	0	42.43	4	0	0	0	0	2.1	9	11	11	0	7	0



ProFile John Patterson

AGE: 27 BAT: R THROW: R HT: 6-5 WT: 208 YRS: 3

YR	W	L	ERA	G	GS	IP	H	R	ER	SO
'03	1	4	6.06	16	8	55	61	39	37	43
'04	4	7	5.03	19	19	98.1	100	58	55	99
'05	0	1	2.57	1	1	7	6	2	2	6

National League | PITCHING

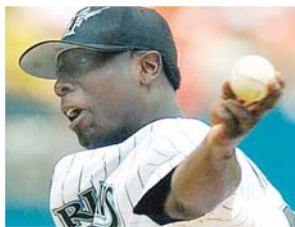
PLAYER	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG
Josh Beckett	2	0	0.00	2	2	1
Dontrelle Willis	2	0	0.00	2	2	2
Roger Clemens	1	0	0.64	2	2	0
Brett Myers	1	0	0.73	2	2	0
Mike Hampton	1	0	1.29	2	2	0
Jake Peavy	1	0	1.32	2	2	0
Tim Hudson	1	0	1.38	2	2	0
Jason Schmidt	2	0	1.38	2	2	0
Jason Marquis	1	0	1.46	2	2	0
Mark Redman	1	0	1.50	2	2	0
Odalis Perez	2	0	1.59	2	2	0
Brad Halsey	1	0	1.80	2	1	0
Josh Fogg	1	0	2.03	2	2	0
C. Zambrano	1	0	2.25	2	2	0
A.J. Burnett	1	1	2.40	2	2	1
Pedro Martinez	1	0	2.40	2	2	1
Adam Eaton	1	0	2.53	2	2	0
Cory Lidle	0	1	2.61	2	2	0
Brandon Webb	2	0	2.70	2	2	0
Doug Davis	2	0	2.77	2	2	0
Derek Lowe	0	1	3.18	2	2	0
Andy Pettitte	0	0	3.18	2	2	0
Russ Ortiz	1	0	3.27	2	2	0
Kazuhisa Ishii	0	1	3.29	2	2	0
Jon Lieber	2	0	3.29	2	2	0
Al Leiter	0	1	3.38	2	2	0

ProFile Dontrelle Willis

AGE: 23 BAT: L THROW: L HT: 6-4 WT: 239 YRS: 2

YR	W	L	ERA	G	GS
'03	14	6	3.31	27	27
'04	10	11	4.02	32	32
'05	2	0	0.00	2	2

YR	IP	H	R	ER	SO
'03	160.2	148	61	59	142
'04	197	210	99	88	139
'05	18	8	0	0	10



SHO	SV	IP	H	R	ER	HBP	BB	SO
1	0	15.0	7	0	0	0	4	17
2	0	18.0	8	0	0	0	2	10
0	0	14.0	7	1	1	0	1	18
0	0	12.1	10	3	1	1	2	15
0	0	14.0	14	2	2	0	3	4
0	0	13.2	10	2	2	0	3	17
0	0	13.0	12	2	2	0	4	8
0	0	13.0	6	3	2	0	5	16
0	0	12.1	14	2	2	1	3	10
0	0	12.0	9	2	2	0	1	8
0	0	11.1	10	2	2	0	3	7
0	0	10.0	11	4	2	1	1	9
0	0	13.1	9	3	3	0	3	11
0	0	12.0	8	3	3	0	6	14
0	0	15.0	15	6	4	0	2	9
0	0	15.0	5	4	4	0	3	21
0	0	10.2	10	5	3	0	2	10
0	0	10.1	11	5	3	1	3	3
0	0	13.1	13	4	4	0	5	6
0	0	13.0	11	4	4	1	6	12
0	0	11.1	12	6	4	1	3	9
0	0	11.1	13	4	4	0	2	8
0	0	11.0	12	5	4	0	5	4
0	0	13.2	4	6	5	1	7	12
0	0	13.2	14	7	5	0	2	6
0	0	10.2	10	4	4	2	5	7

American League | PITCHING

PLAYER	W	L	ERA	G	GS	CG	SHO	SV	IP	H	R	ER	HBP	BB	SO
Rodrigo Lopez	2	0	0.64	2	2	0	0	0	14.0	13	1	1	0	3	10
Tim Wakefield	1	0	1.32	2	2	0	0	0	13.2	8	3	2	0	4	9
Kevin Millwood	0	1	1.38	2	2	0	0	0	13.0	10	2	2	1	3	4
Erik Bedard	0	0	1.50	2	2	0	0	0	12.0	11	2	2	1	3	8
Freddy Garcia	1	0	1.93	2	2	0	0	0	14.0	9	3	3	0	5	10
Ryan Franklin	1	0	2.13	3	1	0	0	0	12.2	8	3	3	0	3	1
Josh Towers	1	0	2.13	2	2	0	0	0	12.2	10	3	3	0	1	12
Joe Blanton	0	0	2.45	2	2	0	0	0	11.0	7	3	3	0	3	4
Gustavo Chacin	2	0	2.45	2	2	0	0	0	11.0	11	3	3	0	2	7
Jamie Moyer	2	0	2.50	3	3	0	0	0	18.0	21	6	5	1	5	13
Pedro Astacio	0	1	2.57	2	2	0	0	0	14.0	11	4	4	0	1	11
Danny Haren	0	1	2.77	2	2	0	0	0	13.0	8	5	4	1	6	9
Kenny Rogers	0	0	2.77	2	2	0	0	0	13.0	13	4	4	0	3	2
Tanyon Sturtze	1	0	2.89	5	0	0	0	0	9.1	10	3	3	0	1	6
Mark Buehrle	1	1	3.00	2	2	0	0	0	15.0	9	5	5	0	4	7
R. Hernandez	1	1	3.14	2	2	0	0	0	14.1	13	5	5	0	6	7
Roy Halladay	2	0	3.27	3	3	1	0	0	22.0	21	8	8	0	2	18
Jose Contreras	0	0	3.55	2	2	0	0	0	12.2	9	5	5	0	7	7
Dave Bush	0	1	3.75	2	2	0	0	0	12.0	9	5	5	0	3	4
O. Hernandez	1	1	3.75	2	2	0	0	0	12.0	14	7	5	1	4	6
Nate Robertson	0	1	3.75	2	2	0	0	0	12.0	10	8	5	2	7	4
Aaron Sele	1	0	3.75	2	2	0	0	0	12.0	9	5	5	0	5	3
M. Hendrickson	0	1	4.15	2	2	0	0	0	13.0	15	7	6	0	4	4
Matt Clement	0	0	4.35	2	2	0	0	0	10.1	11	6	5	2	8	10
D. Brazelton	0	2	4.38	2	2	0	0	0	12.1	10	6	6	0	6	8
Chan Ho Park	1	0	4.38	2	2	0	0	0	6.2	3	2	2	0	2	4
Rob Bell	1	0	4.50	2	2	0	0	0	12.0	14	7	6	1	3	9

ProFile Rodrigo Lopez

AGE: 29 BAT: R THROW: R HT: 6-1 WT: 192 YRS: 4

YR	W	L	ERA	G	GS
'03	7	10	5.82	26	26
'04	14	9	3.59	37	23
'05	2	0	0.64	2	2

YR	IP	H	R	ER	SO
'03	147	188	101	95	103
'04	170.2	164	71	68	121
'05	14	14	1	1	10



ProFile

Esteban Loaiza

AGE: 33 BAT: R THROW: R HT: 6-3 WT: 215 YRS: 10

YR	W	L	ERA	G	GS	IP	H	R	ER	SO
'03	21	9	2.90	34	34	226.1	196	75	73	207
'04	10	7	5.71	31	27	183	217	124	116	117
'05	0	0	4.61	2	2	13.2	12	7	7	7

- Won his Major League Baseball debut against the Philadelphia Phillies on April 29, 1995.
- After never winning more than 11 games in a season, he went 21-9 with the Chicago White Sox in 2003, finishing second in the Cy Young voting.
- In 2003, joined Fernando Valenzuela as the only Mexican pitcher with 21 wins in a season.
- Was traded from the White Sox to the New York Yankees in the middle of the 2004 season.
- Has 100 career victories.



JOHN AMIS/AP

On the Farm

Adam Wogan's face lights up when he talks about Savannah. As director of development for Washington, Wogan tracks more than 170 players in the Nationals' minor league system, including Triple-A ...

Nationals Brass Keeps a Close Eye on Trio

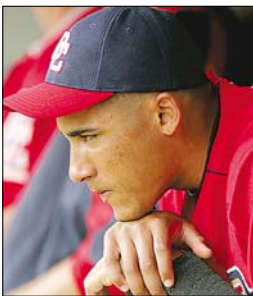
Double-A, Single-A and Rookie level.

But after just returning from a trip to see the Single-A Savannah Sand Gnats, Wogan is particularly excited about the future of three players: shortstop **Ian Desmond** and outfielders **Rogearvin Bernadina** and **Edgardo Baez**.

"They are the three young guys that really look great," said Wogan.

Wogan said Desmond, 19, who was selected in the third round of the 2004 First-Year Player Draft, has the most potential of the three. At 6-2, 185, he's often compared to **Derek Jeter** because of his size and steady glove.

"He's really one of the top guys to get excited



Shortstop Ian Desmond

and is second only to Baez in slugging percentage (.632).

about," said Wogan. "He's swinging the bat real well right now and it seems like he's in on every play on defense."

Bernadina, 20, who was listed as the Nationals' 10th best prospect in 2004 Baseball America, leads the team in RBI

Baez, 19, was selected in the fourth round of the 2003 First-Year Player Draft. He's hitting .400 and leads the team in hits, total bases and walks, and is tied for the club lead in stolen bases.

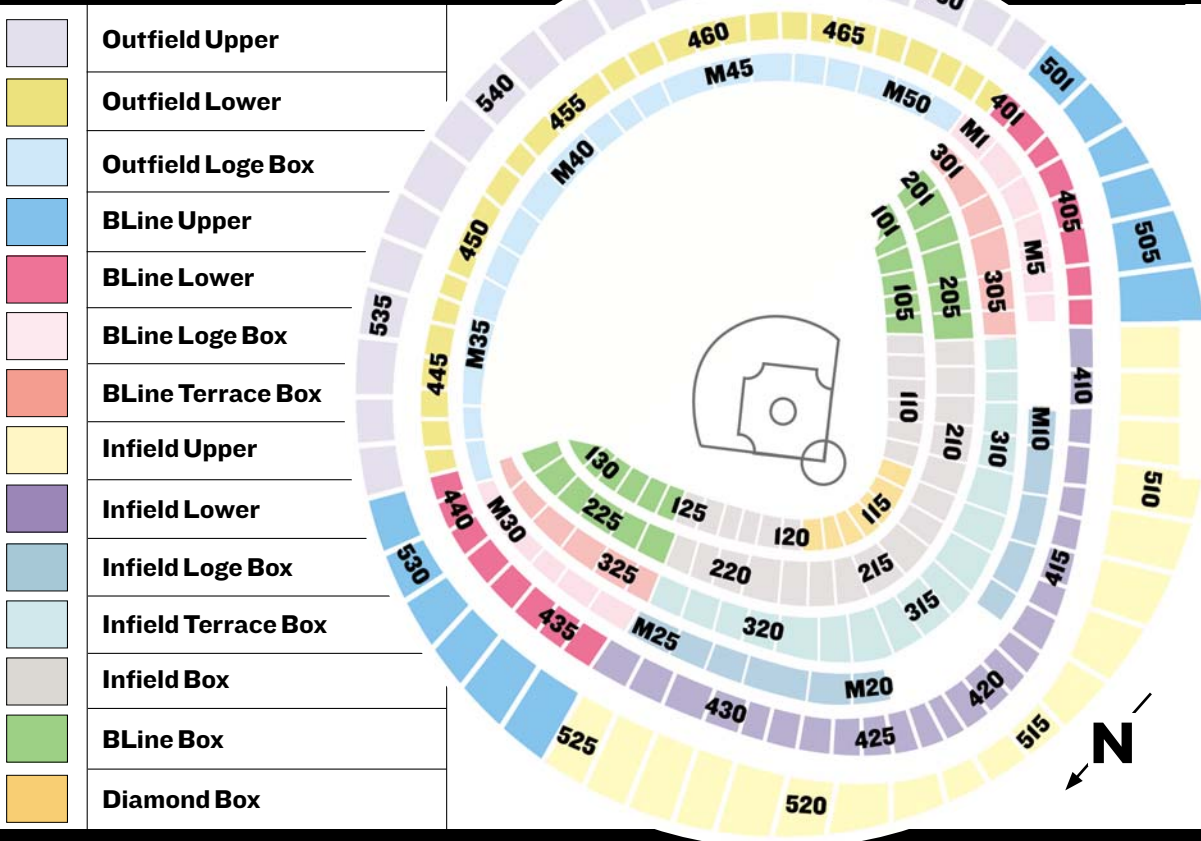
Wogan said all three have plenty of room for improvement and will benefit from the hours of instruction that occur before every game. And while Wogan emphasized that they are still a few years away from the big leagues, he added, "Desmond could move pretty fast."

Meanwhile, Desmond, Bernadina and Baez will continue to grow and learn in Savannah. "Those are the three young guys who have the most promise," said Wogan. "It's a fun team to watch." GARY KARTON




MLB | STANDINGS

	TEAM	W	L	PCT	GB	HOME	ROAD	RS	RA	STRK	LIO
N.L. EAST	Washington	06	04	.600	--	1-0	5-4	41	55	Win3	6-4
	Florida	05	04	.556	.5	5-4	0-0	44	15	Won2	5-4
	Atlanta	05	04	.556	.5	3-3	2-1	34	39	Lost2	5-4
	Philadelphia	04	05	.444	1.5	1-2	3-3	49	43	Lost2	4-5
	New York	04	05	.444	1.5	3-0	1-5	35	39	Won4	4-5
N.L. CENTRAL	Milwaukee	05	03	.625	--	2-1	3-2	44	25	Won1	5-3
	Cincinnati	04	04	.500	1	3-0	1-4	36	34	Won1	4-4
	Houston	04	04	.500	1	4-1	0-3	26	28	Lost3	4-4
	Chicago Cubs	04	05	.444	1.5	3-3	1-2	47	42	Won1	4-5
	St. Louis	03	04	.429	1.5	2-3	1-1	32	42	Lost1	3-4
N.L. WEST	Pittsburgh	03	06	.333	2.5	0-2	3-4	24	50	Lost1	3-6
	L.A. Dodgers	06	02	.750	--	2-0	4-2	55	39	Won2	6-2
	Arizona	06	04	.600	1	6-3	0-1	55	56	Lost1	6-3
	San Diego	05	04	.556	1.5	2-2	3-2	53	41	Lost1	5-4
	San Francisco	04	04	.500	2	4-2	0-2	42	45	Lost2	4-4
A.L. EAST	Toronto	07	03	.700	--	2-1	5-2	57	39	Won1	7-3
	Baltimore	05	04	.556	1.5	1-2	4-2	48	48	Lost1	5-4
	Tampa Bay	04	05	.444	2.5	4-5	0-0	47	45	Won1	4-5
	Boston	04	05	.444	2.5	2-1	2-4	44	48	Won1	4-5
	N.Y. Yankees	04	05	.444	2.5	3-3	1-2	42	54	Lost1	4-5
A.L. CENTRAL	Minnesota	06	03	.667	--	4-2	2-1	47	37	Won4	6-3
	Chicago W. Sox	06	03	.667	--	2-1	4-2	38	38	Lost1	6-3
	Cleveland	04	05	.444	2	1-2	3-3	39	43	Won1	4-5
	Detroit	03	06	.333	3	3-3	0-3	52	47	Lost4	3-6
	Kansas City	03	06	.333	3	0-3	3-3	34	53	Lost3	3-6
A.L. WEST	Seattle	05	04	.556	--	2-4	3-0	51	38	Won3	5-4
	L.A. Angels	05	04	.556	--	3-3	2-1	50	49	Lost1	5-4
	Oakland	04	05	.444	1	1-2	3-3	35	38	Won1	4-5
	Texas	04	06	.400	1.5	1-3	3-3	53	60	Lost1	4-5


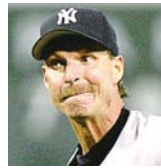

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American League | HITTING

RUNS BATTED IN	HOME RUNS	STOLEN BASES
		
E. Hinske, TOR, 13 R. Sexson, SEA, 12 H. Matsui, NYY, 11 B. Roberts, BAL, 10 D. Young, DET, 10	B. Roberts, BAL, 4 P. Konerko, CWS, 4 D. Young, DET, 3 J. Varitek, BOS, 3 H. Matsui, NYY, 3	J. Lugo, TB, 5 C. Crawford, TB, 4 T. Hunter, MIN, 4 S. Podsednik, CWS, 4 B. Roberts, BAL, 4




American League | PITCHING

WINS	STRIKEOUTS	SAVES
		
R. Lopez, BAL, 2 R. Halladay, TOR, 2 J. Moyer, SEA, 2 J. Santana, MIN, 2 G. Chacin, TOR, 2	R. Johnson, NYY, 19 R. Halladay, TOR, 18 J. Santana, MIN, 17 J. Moyer, SEA, 13 J. Towers, TOR, 12	M. Takatsu, CHW, 3 B. Wickman, CLE, 3 M. Batista, TOR, 3 F. Cordero, TEX, 3 J. Nathan, MIN, 2

National League | HITTING

RUNS BATTED IN	HOME RUNS	STOLEN BASES
		
P. Burrell, PHI, 17 X. Nady, SD, 11 J. Kent, LAD, 11 D. Lee, CHC, 11 T. Glaus, ARI, 10	J. Guillen, WAS, 5 P. Burrell, PHI, 4 R. Sanders, STL, 4 T. Glaus, ARI, 4 J. Randa, CIN, 3	O. Vizquel, SF, 5 B. Abreu, PHI, 3 M. Loretta, SD, 3 J. Reyes, NYM, 3 W. Taveras, HOU, 3

National League | PITCHING

WINS	STRIKEOUTS	SAVES
		
J. Beckett, FLA, 2 D. Willis, FLA, 2 J. Lieber, PHI, 2 B. Webb, ARI, 2 J. Schmidt, SF, 2	P. Martinez, NYM, 21 R. Clemens, HOU, 18 J. Beckett, FLA, 17 J. Peavy, SD, 17 J. Vazquez, ARI, 17	B. Lyon, ARI, 4 B. Lidge, HOU, 3 J. Mesa, PIT, 3 D. Kolb, ATL, 3 D. Graves, CIN, 2

Close Enough

It's way too early to know if the inaugural Washington Nationals will be any good. But one thing is already clear: They're a lot of fun to watch.

As long as the game is close — and there have been a few early-season blowouts, for sure — the Nationals are never out of it. Three times in their first week alone they got the game-winning hit in their last at-bat and then left it up to their surprisingly strong bullpen to close the deal.

Of course, no one has any illusions that Washington will make the playoffs this year, and not just because they play in the same division as the Braves and Marlins, the two World Series contenders they face this week. Instead, Washingtonians are treating the squad like an expansion team. For fans who are happy enough just to have a team in town, every win still feels like a little present.

But the truth is the Nats are not an expansion team. They're a group who made up the backbone of an 83-79 Expos team in 2003 who just happen to be in a new city with a new name.

It's a fine distinction, but it goes a long way toward explaining how the Nats keep finding ways to win close games late.

Jose Guillen, Jose Vidro and Brian Schneider — who all have at least one game-winning hit this season — are good enough to start for most teams, as are a number of the team's other top players, like Nick Johnson and Chad Cordero.

What will keep this team from contending for the National League East crown is the lack of a true superstar, which won't come until there's an owner in place who's willing to spend some cash. The missing link appears to



PABLO MARTINEZ MONSIVIS/AP

be a big bat for the offense. Twice last week, the Nats were shut out by the Marlins. Yes, Florida has a top-notch pitching staff — anchored by Josh Beckett and Dontrelle Willis — but it's hard to stay competitive if you can't score runs off tough pitchers.

Luckily, the Nats' pitching staff has started strong — led by ace Livan Hernandez (1-1, 4.50 ERA) — keeping hope alive that one big offensive inning will be enough.

Some games, that one inning won't come. But do you want to miss out when the Nats explode for a six-run inning like they did in last week's 11-4 win over the Braves?

If the Nats could win two games in extra innings and then come back from a 3-1 deficit on the Braves in the ninth before playing a single game at home, imagine how they'll do with 30,000 fans urging them on 81 times a year.

That's the one thing about this group: They capture your imagination by showing flashes of greatness between their many, many moments of mediocrity.

MATT SWENSON

Nationals Agenda

2005 SCHEDULE

→ Home Games Shaded

→ 76th Annual All Star Game, July 12 at Comerica Park, Detroit

April

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	PHI		PHI	PHI	FLA	FLA
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
FLA	ATL	ATL	ATL	AZ		AZ
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
AZ	FLA	FLA	ATL	ATL	NYM	NYM
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
NYM	PHI	PHI	PHI		NYM	NYM

July

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
					1	2
					CHC	CHC
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
CHC	NYM	NYM	NYM	NYM	PHI	PHI
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
PHI				MIL	MIL	MIL
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
MIL	COL	COL	COL	HOU	HOU	HOU
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
HOU		ATL	ATL	ATL	FLA	FLA
31	FLA					

October

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
						1
2	PHI					



Schedule subject to change

May

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
NYM	LAD	LAD	LAD		SF	SF
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
SF	AZ	AZ	AZ		CHC	CHC
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
CHC	MIL	MIL	MIL	MIL	TOR	TOR
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
TOR	CIN	CIN	CIN		STL	STL
29	30	31				
STL	ATL	ATL				

June

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
			1	2	3	4
			ATL	ATL	FLA	FLA
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
FLA		OAK	OAK	OAK	SEA	SEA
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
SEA	LAA	LAA	LAA		TEX	TEX
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
TEX	PIT	PIT	PIT		TOR	TOR
26	27	28	29	30		
TOR		PIT	PIT	PIT		

August

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
		LAD	LAD	LAD	SD	SD
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
SD		HOU	HOU	HOU	COL	COL
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
COL	PHI	PHI	PHI	PHI	NYM	NYM
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
NYM		CIN	CIN	CIN	STL	STL
28	29	30	31			
STL	ATL	ATL	ATL			

September

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
				1	2	3
				ATL	PHI	PHI
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
PHI	FLA	FLA	FLA	FLA	ATL	ATL
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
ATL		NYM	NYM	NYM	SD	SD
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
SD		SF	SF	SF	NYM	NYM
25	26	27	28	29	30	
NYM	FLA	FLA	FLA		PHI	

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